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EDITORIAL

Expose and oppose the pro-imperialist and antipoor “reforms” of the US-Macapagal- Arroyo regime!

Macapagal-Arroyo’s act during her state of the nation address (SONA) delivered on the opening session of the 12th Congress on July 23 was cheap gimmickry and full of propoor pretensions. She skipped describing the country’s critical condition and merely presented her government program which was filled with lofty promises and adorned with slogans for “fighting poverty”.

The framework of the Macapagal-Arroyo regime’s new program was merely lifted from the Ramos regime’s bankrupt Medium Term Philippine Development Program (MTPDP) and the Estrada regime’s version of the latter, “Angat Pinoy 2004”. The slogan “fight against poverty” was also copied from the ousted regime.

The regime’s newly garbed MTPDP has no essential content other than that of imperialist “globalization”. It is merely a perpetuation by the Macapagal-Arroyo regime of the old semicolonial and semifeudal basis of the poverty, backwardness and oppression afflicting the



Filipino people. Only this time, it has been enhanced with a lot of embellishments that masquerade as programs that ensure the welfare of the poor.

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The program has four elements: (1) business for job creation; (2) agricultural modernization; (3) ensuring the welfare of impoverished sectors of society; and (4) justice in government.

"Business for job creation"

For Macapagal-Arroyo, the solution to widespread unemployment and poverty in the country relies on the continuing and further advancing imperialist "globalization". She turns a blind eye to the more widespread, weightier and more bitter reality of exploitation, oppression and suffering this brings to the people, especially the toiling masses.

At the core of all the "reforms" bandied about by the regime are the further implementation of liberalization, deregulation, privatization and denationalization of the country's remaining strategic industries and public utilities.

The passage of the Power Reform Act was the regime's opening salvo in implementing its "reforms". This can only lead to intervention by foreign monopoly capitalists, the further strengthening of their cohorts among the local electric service monopolies and their accumulation of excessive profits. All of this will be detrimental to consumers of electricity and the people (*for a more extensive discussion on the Power Reform Act, refer to the primer prepared by the CPP Information Bureau*).

Currently a raging issue is the privatization of the Social Security System (SSS), the government agency that administers the insurance needs of private sector workers and employees. Total insurance funds of the agency's 23 million members amounting to P174 billion will be placed in the hands of private foreign and local companies.

Within the next three to four years, the regime hopes to effect a leap in economic growth based mainly on the development of information and communications technology (ICT). But ICT development in the country has been confined to only two minor aspects—proliferation in the use of cellphones and pirated compact disks—with the most important aspects remaining undeveloped. Because of such proliferation, cellphones, telecommunications equipment and accessories and electronic and electrical equipment now count among the country's biggest importations. A large chunk (13.3%) of the country's miniscule income growth for the first six months comes from cellphone services and the reproduction of compact disks. Almost P48 billion or 55% of total new investments approved by the Board of Investments (BOI) in the first half of the year has been allotted to the expansion of the coverage of telecommunications companies. But cellphone texting and viewing and listening to pirated films and music on compact

discs are hardly fundamental to the lives of the broad masses and cannot be relied upon to spur genuine economic advance in the country. Being the "text capital of the world" has diverted a great deal of the country's capacity and productive resources.

Another aspect of ICT that the regime likewise hopes to enhance is computer software development and data management. But the regime's objective of propagating the use of computers and telecommunications nationwide is not likely to happen, much less its goal of transforming the Philippines into the internet service center of Asia. The present limited scope of line interconnections, facilities and the limited use of computers, the internet and telecommunications nationwide, especially in rural areas, coupled with government inefficiency in managing and developing related infrastructure present a big obstacle. A very small percentage of the population (8.3%) has cellphones and only 4.1% has landline telephones. Less than 1% has computers and an even smaller percentage has internet access. Even more fundamental obstacles are government corruption, the low salaries of employees and the exodus of many professionals and skilled workers abroad to earn higher incomes.

There is no basis for concluding that the ICT industry in the country on its own can prosper especially at a time when it is plummeting worldwide, especially in the US and even in the so-called tiger economies like Singapore and Taiwan.

The regime also hopes to develop the country's ICT industry and infrastructure by attracting foreign investments through the enactment of laws that will completely deregulate and privatize

the industry in the country.

The regime's hopes of invigorating small and medium enterprises is nothing but a wild dream. This will not come to pass so long as the biggest obstacles to setting up national industry exist: imperialist domination and stifling of the national economy, the dominance of neocolonial trade and the absence of any genuine program to advance national industrialization, the backwardness of the vast countryside, corruption and anomalies in government and the policy of depressing workers' wages.

"Agricultural modernization"

Still another of the regime's pipe dreams is to create a million jobs in agriculture and fisheries within a year through the continued implementation of the Agricultural and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA). The AFMA, which was enacted in 1997, aggressively entices foreign capital to invest in agribusiness and stresses the production for export of crops such as asparagus and cutflowers, instead of rice and corn for consumption. Instead of helping the dwindling coconut industry, on which more than 25 million people rely, the regime is letting in investors from Malaysia, even allotting 160,000 hectares for them to set up palm tree plantations in accordance with its program of implementing AFMA. Palm oil competes with coconut oil in the international market. Thus, the setting up of such plantations in the country will cause hundreds of thousands of coconut farmers and agricultural workers to lose their jobs.

Under the AFMA, widespread land-use conversion has been stepped up. This has further ruined the capacity of local food production and made the country dependent on the importation of rice, corn and other foodstuff. One year after AFMA was enacted, palay production fell to its lowest level since 1987. Corn production likewise fell to its lowest level since 1984. What AFMA has created are not jobs but further unemployment and hunger in the countryside.

With the extent of government corruption, not much can be expected no matter how big a budget is allocated for agriculture and fisheries. Funds are depleted at the top, with a very small amount trickling down for actual project implementation.

Aside from this, a more fundamental and primary obstacle to agricultural development and widespread job creation in the countryside is the centuries-old and unresolved problem of feudal and semifeudal relations in agriculture and the growing lack of land to till among the majority of peasants. Any agricultural development program not anchored on the implementation of genuine land reform will come to naught.

With frontier lands having long been exhausted, Macapagal-Arroyo's promised distribution of 100,000 hectares of public lands annually is dubious. Most of it will likely be in the form of fake distributions of land to national minorities and settlers who have long owned, lived in and tilled the lands "distributed" to them. In reality, such



lands are private but untitled, and are merely being called "public" just so government could claim that it has distributed some land. To claim other land from already meager forests and watersheds will only be detrimental to the environment.

Since the regime has done nothing to smash the economic and political power of landlords, its promise of distributing 100,000 hectares of private lands every year will remain a mere promise. This is likewise such a low target compared to the 10.3 million hectares that should be covered by land reform, 7.66 million hectares of which are privately owned by landlords. Up to now, only 3% of the latter has been actually covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).

The widespread perpetuation of conversion of agricultural lands for industrial, commercial, tourism and residential purposes is likewise inconsistent with the regime's claim that it is serious about land reform, especially since such lands have already been covered by CARP.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime ignores the grave problem faced by farmers and the people regarding the dumping of imported agricultural and other products from other countries, due to "globalization" and repressive treaties entered into by the government like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). This problem will worsen within Macapagal-Arroyo's term, especially by 2004-05 when the

Philippines is set to fully implement its commitments to the GATT-

"Ensuring the welfare of impoverished sectors of society"

WTO.

Macapagal-Arroyo has said that she acknowledges the public's grievances against rising prices and inadequate wages. But her acknowledgment of the conditions of workers who are in dire straits due to low wages is all for show. She has done nothing save from saying that she hopes "Congress or the wage boards would decide on the appropriate salaries". Her call to businessmen to voluntarily advance expenses for the temporary Emergency Cost of Living Allowance (ECOLA) that would anyway be credited against any wage increase, along with her offer of other cheap substitutes to an actual wage hike, are all indications of her lack of interest in raising

workers' wages. On the other hand, she has quickly granted several pay hikes to AFP and PNP forces.

The regime likewise claims that it closely watches oil prices. Yet it has been inutile in the face of two successive oil price hikes in the short period that Macapagal-Arroyo has been in office.

The government says that it would also sell cheap rice to the poorest of the poor through the "Tindahan ni Gloria Labandera".

This is but a copy of the previous regime's "Erap Rolling Stores" scheme. But the selection of beneficiaries and those who would be issued passbooks so they could avail themselves of cheap rice would have to

pass through the wringer of proadministration politicians. This would merely serve as an instrument for corrupt politicking. Worse, this is merely a scheme to cover up the withdrawal from the National Food Authority of its role of directly selling rice to the public, and is in preparation for the eventual privatization of the NFA and the liberalization of rice importation.

Up to 150,000 poor families per year would supposedly be granted the right to buy their own houses. But the regime has not laid out any means by which the urban poor, jobless as they are, would be able to pay for these houses. The more fundamental issue that must be resolved on the part of millions of the urban poor is the problem of widespread unemployment.

Macapagal-Arroyo is reviving the Emergency Employment Program (EEP) that was first launched under the term of her father, former Pres. Diosdado Macapagal. This was copied from Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which supposedly addressed the severe depression that hit the US from 1930-40. Macapagal-Arroyo hopes that her EEP will create jobs for 20,000 people annually. She would have them employed in some token jobs just so they could bring home some pay. This scheme is

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absurd since the employment that it would generate would not be in necessary and productive jobs but in contrived ones. Even during Diosdado Macapagal's time, the EEP was a butt of jokes and criticism and was a failure.

With Macapagal-Arroyo's myriad promises to the urban and rural poor, she has tried to make it appear that her regime has shifted its priorities in their favor. But nothing has changed in its lopsided priorities: Like its predecessor, the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime has not discarded the Automatic Debt Appropriations Act that continues to allot the biggest chunk—40% of the national budget—to service foreign debt which has now gone up to \$53 billion. Because the suppressive and unproductive AFP and PNP remain on top of the regime's list of priorities, their budget for modernization, salary increases for officers, soldiers and policemen, CAGU expansion and others has even been increased.

"Justice in government"

No matter how much Macapagal-Arroyo calls for morality in government, she can do nothing to decisively rid it of anomalies, especially within the higher levels of the bureaucracy for so long as the existing reactionary and decadent state has not been decisively eradicated and radically replaced. Corruption within the state is set by the encompassing semicolonial, semifederal and bureaucrat-capitalist system of governance and politics in the country. The Philippines remains a client state of the US, led by the big landlord-comprador-bourgeois

classes and serves only as a milch cow of the ruling classes and their minions. Service to the people is confined to speeches, remains only on paper and is mere posturing. Macapagal-Arroyo pretends to be clean because it was the people's intense anger at brazen corruption and plunder that brought down the president she succeeded. She witnessed how the mass movement against serious anomalies in government rose in tumult and knows that it could well be trained on her regime if it should be revealed that severe corruption continues up to the present.

This early, however, the foul smell of corruption has already reeked out of the palace. The president's husband, Miguel Arroyo and others close to him are now in the thick of controversy. His hand was apparent in the appointment of close friends and business associates to lucrative government positions. One example is Pantaleon Alvarez who was appointed DOTC secretary, as well as two other close friends of Arroyo who were appointed vice chairman/general manager and media consultant of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Department of Justice secretary Hernando Perez has also been implicated in the precipitate grant of a \$450-billion dollar energy project at the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan Power Complex to Impsa Engineering Ltd., an Argentine company, without undergoing the requisite bidding. This was the very first project approved by the regime, less than a week after taking power.

Macapagal-Arroyo rationalizes her penchant for reconciling and giving way to various VIP privileges and caprices demanded by the Estradas in relation to their

prosecution and trial. She claims that she is merely being sensitive to the sentiments of those who continue to support Estrada. In reality, she fears incurring the ire of the Iglesia ni Cristo and El Shaddai leaderships, who both support Estrada. It is clear that the regime's support for the all-out prosecution and speedy trial of the Estradas is negotiable. The only thing that prevents the regime from granting numerous concessions and compromises and pushes it to go all-out in prosecuting the Estradas is the close and militant vigilance of progressive and democratic organizations.

In this regard, there is need for the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime to pursue the cases against the Marcoses and immediately recover and return to the people the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth. The same goes for the indemnification that 10,000 former political prisoners of the Marcos dictatorship should have received

after having won their case against the dictatorship.

Before the resumption of peace talks between the GRP and the NDFP, the regime should have released all political prisoners. But there are more than two hundred of them still in prison, with their numbers swelling in the first six months of the regime.

In the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's first five months alone, 50 major incidents of human



rights and inter-national humanitarian law have been documented. Among the victims are 322 individuals (including 61 women and 27 minors); 103 families; and 50 communities. Not included are Moro people arrested without warrant in Basilan and other Moro communities in Metro Manila due to the AFP and PNP's failure to put an end to the Abu Sayyaf bandit group.

After the saturation drives in urban poor communities in the first week of May, Moro communities in Basilan and Metro Manila were also subjected to zoning, with residents being arrested and abused. The regime rode on its declaration of a "state of lawlessness" to wage total war, forcibly evacuate the civilian population, ransack homes and conduct warrantless arrests. Right after the successful release of New People's Army prisoner of war (POW) Army Maj. Noel Buan, the AFP and PNP launched operations and attacked vast areas of Mindoro where Major Buan had been held for a long period and released. The AFP also launched vicious operations in Central Luzon to clear the area for the peace of mind of US troops participating in Balikatan 2001 (in May) and CARAT 2001 (in June), as part of the implementation of the Visiting Forces Agreement between the US and the Philippines.

In continuing the peace talks between the NDFP and the GRP, both parties have ratified anew the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). But the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime has as yet done nothing to uphold and

propagate it among its armed forces. Instead, the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's militarism and puppetry have worsened. Thousands of people are being victimized by the regime's counterrevolutionary war and violations of human rights.

The AFP perpetually fails in its fight against the Abu Sayyaf because a number of military officials are in cahoots with the bandit group, primarily those who are at the frontline (such as 1st Infantry Division commander Brig. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, 103rd Brigade commander Col. Juvenal Narcise, 18th IB commander Maj. Eliseo Campued and two other captains under Narcise). From the beginning, the establishment of the Abu Sayyaf has been an AFP project meant to divide the Bangsamoro revolutionary forces. Nonetheless, the regime (especially the militarists within it) is using the AFP's fight against the Abu Sayyaf bandits as an excuse to once

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more push their cherished militarist and fascist proposals. Among these are the proposed institutionalization of the National ID system, expansion of the CAFGU and the legitimization of vigilantes. Militarists within the regime are once again pushing for such measures not only to eradicate the Abu Sayyaf but more so, to use them against the people's revolutionary struggle. Nonetheless, this has been thwarted by criticism and resistance from the democratic forces and the people.

All these are indications of the continued dominance of militarists within the regime and the regime's growing preference for a military solution.

Thus, the Macapagal-Arroyo regime has gone overboard in catering to the military and police. Macapagal-Arroyo has appointed many retired AFP and PNP generals to her cabinet and other leading government offices. She has generously granted successive benefits to officers, soldiers and policemen. She has raised the AFP's modernization budget from P4.6 billion to P10 billion. She has also increased compensation for soldiers killed or wounded in action. She has likewise made the proposed law providing for increases in the salaries of AFP and PNP elements a priority.

In the midst of all this, her military advisers are preparing an Oplan Makabayan in new garb that shall mirror the government and armed forces' militarist orientation in dealing with the issue of war and peace instead of addressing the socio-economic and political roots of the armed conflict. This is reflected in the president and DND's orders to all AFP units to launch attacks on the NPA to weaken the NDFP's position in its peace talks with the GRP. The peace talks between the GRP and the NDFP has been proceeding slowly. It has been further delayed due to the GRP panel's irrational reaction to the just punishment meted by the NPA on the fascist Col. Rodolfo Aguinaldo. With the help of anti-communist social democrats, the GRP is now waging a "peace offensive" in various regions and localities in the country. This is being

done, not to enhance the climate for peace but rather to worsen it. The GRP wishes to attract public support for its campaign to effect the surrender of the revolutionary armed forces and prepare the people's minds for the GRP's conduct of all-out war against the revolutionary movement.

Make the fundamental problems and their national-democratic solutions the national agenda

The US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime has been in power for only six months. But it has already further mired the country in deeper economic and political crisis. It is not necessary to wait for the regime's false promises to fall flat before exposing and opposing its pro-imperialist and antipeople programs.

Adornments and stopgap measures alone cannot solve the problem of poverty in the country. Poverty cannot be resolved without a decisive resolution of the very roots of the country's basic problems of imperialism, feudalism and bureaucrat capitalism that have existed for more than a century and are worsening. The regime's "solutions", wherein it scrambles to buttress the very causes of these problems, will actually worsen them and will all the more fail. Foremost among these is the thorough opening of the economy to further abuse by big foreign monopoly and local comprador capitalists under the program of "globalization".

It is both timely and of utmost necessity to propagate and strive to raise as the national agenda the people's fundamental problems as the source of intense poverty in the country and to highlight and assert them mainly through street actions, advancing antifeudal struggles and other mass struggles, advancing armed struggle, launching public discussions and widespread propaganda; and likewise through operating within parliament and raising them in the peace talks. We must assiduously present strategic questions on social issues along with thoroughly confronting and resisting tactically every scheme hatched by the regime. Alongside our struggles for immediate and initial relief and benefits for the people, we must clearly present before and explain to the people that long-term solutions lie within the framework of no less than the program for a people's democratic revolution. **AB**

Continuously worsening economic crisis in the country

The economic crisis in the country continued to worsen in the first six months of the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's term. Even the ruling classes have been shaken by this crisis. But most severely affected are the people, especially the toiling masses.

The country is beset by a chronic crisis due to the continued existence of the decadent semicolonial and semifeudal social system that has been exacerbated by the crisis of the world capitalist system. The latter is approaching a general recession coupled with deflation. This recession, which may last for a number of years, is pulling the country's plummeting economy to take a further plunge. The most striking indication of this crisis is the steep fall in production and the drop in exports in the past six months. From an average of 4.01% and a peak of 4.6% in 2000, the annual GDP (gross domestic product) growth rate fell to 2.5% in the first five months of the year. This is lower than the 3.3% level for the same period in 2000 and the 3.8% level the year before. Computed per capita, the GDP grew by a mere 1.5% in May.

FALL OF THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Lower GDP growth rates are due mainly to the fall of the industrial sector. From 4.4% in the same period in 2000 and 4.1% in the immediately preceding quarter, the sector grew by a mere 0.1%. The fall of industry was reflected in the drop in the country's overall exports. GDP growth appeared to be positive due to higher prices and a slight growth in the services sector (4.5%, mainly from the expansion of cellphone services by telecommunications companies) and agriculture (2.3%). Overall, there has been a drop in the utilization of the country's productive capacity from 79.8% in 1999 and 80.1 % in 2000, towards 77.8% in the first quarter of 2001 and 76.3% in May.

The economy further ran aground in the second quarter of the year. Exports fell sharply by 24.7% in June. This is estimated to be the worst drop in

exports since the 1970s. Production for export comprises 57.4% of the country's overall production.

Export of electronic components fell by 39.27%, reflecting the biggest drop. In the main, these are mere reexports of semiconductors partially processed in the country for use by the ICT industries of other countries. These exports comprise 52.7% of the country's overall exports. Before the latter dropped this year, they comprised from 71.3% (2000) to 72.5% (1999) of the country's overall exports. The export of electronic components from the Philippines is dependent on the US' ICT economy. Due to the overproduction of computers, accessories and services and other high technology electronic products, the ICT economy continuously fell along with the entire capitalist system in the US and worldwide. This will mean the continued drop of the country's exports. The country's backward and moribund economy is further being pulled down by the currently falling ICT economy in the US and the rest of the world.

Garments exports also fell by 9.1%. This remains the country's second biggest export, with 76% destined for the US market. There is an overproduction of garments worldwide and many other countries export cheaper garments to the US.

Garments production in the country continues to plunge, with a further drop expected due to the dumping of imported and smuggled garments. Half of the 300,000 tons of garments consumed nationwide is imported or smuggled. In the earlier part of the 1990s, up to 1.5 million spindles were produced by 12,000 garments companies in the country. Since then, 9,000 companies have collapsed, with only 350,000 spindles produced by the industry's remaining 3,000 companies.

Growing balance of trade deficit. The 24.4% drop in exports is the main reason behind the sudden increase in the balance of trade (BOT) deficit for the second quarter of the year. The drop in exports was due to shrinking international markets for the country's exports. This has led to a \$31-million deficit in the BOT for the month of June. This, despite a mere 4.6% increase in the country's imports, which is lower than the 10% growth in May. It is amusing to note that while electronic parts imports are dropping monthly, there has been a growth in telecommunications imports (at the level of \$260-\$290 million monthly) geared only towards expanding the number of cellphones serviced by Smart, Globe and other telecommunications companies in the country from 4,000,000 to 7,000,000.

One cause of higher importations is the increased cost of the dollar vis a vis the peso. From an average of P48.47=\$1 in March, the exchange rate stood at P53=\$1 in July. The dwindling value of the peso has resulted in economic instability and lack of confidence in the country's economy. The Bangko Sentral's intervention has temporarily raised the peso's value to P51-P52=\$1.

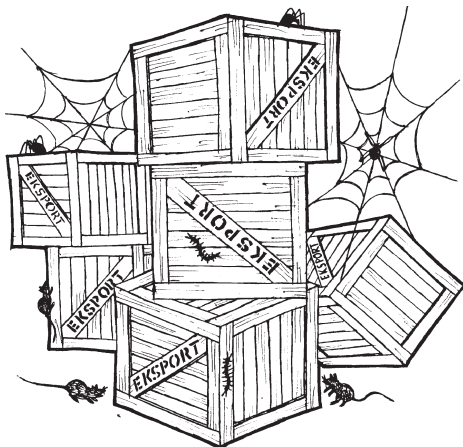
Oil prices also rose by 12% in the international market in April. This, along with other factors, brought about an \$81-million BOT deficit in May. In April, this went as high as \$477 million. The country's BOT deficit will continue to worsen due to the ongoing trend of falling exports and the dwindling value of the country's currency.

INVESTMENT AND FINANCIAL CRISIS

The fall in the country's production and exports and increasing import costs have brought about a further worsening of the country's investments and finances.

Growing balance of payments deficit. The country's balance of payments (BOP) deficit went up to \$755 million (or an equivalent of P37.75 billion based on a P50=\$1 exchange rate) in April. This is a reverse of the \$820-million BOP surplus for the same period in 2000. This is due mainly to the previously mentioned rise in the BOT deficit, a 16.8% reduction in remittances by migrant workers (\$2.15 billion from \$2.58 billion) and the big amount of foreign capital withdrawn or repatriated.

Withdrawal of foreign investments. Since 1997, there has been no change in the negative ratings given by Moodys and Standard & Poor—both monopoly capitalist institutions that analyze political, economic and financial conditions and risks and give out investment recommendations. Their ratings have caused the country to fall from 29th to 40th place. Ratings from Merrill Lynch, a leading international stock broker, have caused the Philippines to drop from being 15th in the list of "newly emergent markets" in January 2001 to 30th place in the



second quarter of the year.

In the first five months of the year, total direct investments in the country plunged by 292%. In this period, direct foreign investments fell by 29.59% while portfolio investments (speculative capital) dropped by 50.76%. It is speculative capital that spurred the artificial "growth" of the Philippine economy before the financial crisis of 1997. Among those that have withdrawn investments from the Philippines are companies from the US, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia.

In 1992-98, direct investments withdrawn from the country stood at an average of \$1.25 billion annually. This has suddenly and dramatically increased in the past two years, reaching \$18.9 billion in 1999 and \$14.97 billion in 2000. This year, \$7 billion have already been withdrawn in the first five months alone.

The country's huge external debt. The Philippines' external debt reached \$49.95 billion in March 2001. This comprises 64.6% of the GNP. This is slightly lower than last year's figure of \$52.45 billion (64.7% of GNP) due to the rescheduling of the country's debts. On the other hand, the rate of debt servicing has increased. It is debt servicing that gobbles up the country's earnings. This now stands at \$6 billion (or P300 billion based on an exchange rate of

P50=\$1) annually. In March, up to 17.24% of the GNP went to foreign debt servicing, the highest in the past eight years. In March 2000, only 11.83% of the GNP was allotted for this purpose.

Because of the huge government budget deficit, the regime has been scrounging around for new credit. Thus, the country's foreign debt will exceed \$52.45 billion, the highest level reached the previous year.

Worsening government bankruptcy. The national budgetary deficit continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. From P50 billion in 1998, it rose to P111.7 billion in 1999 and P134.2 billion in 2000. It is expected to reach P147 billion or more for the whole of 2001.

The government has nowhere to turn to, to fill up the worsening deficit except to sell more government-owned

corporations and public utilities, levy more taxes on the people and incur more debts. The government will impose an even heavier debt burden on the people. Its debts, which stood at only P2,166 billion in 2000, have risen to P2,575.4 billion in July. Of this, P1,103.4 billion or 42.8% are internal debts and P1,472 billion (or \$29.44 based on an exchange rate of P50=\$1) are external debts.

Ironically, however, almost half of the government's budget and income goes to debt servicing. This only further increases the government's expenditures and deficit. As time passes, the government ends up paying a growing amount for debt service. In 1997, 26.6% of its income was allotted by government to service debts; 35.4% in 1998; 42.9% in 1999; and 44.3% in 2000. This has gone up to 46% in June (30.1% for interest and 15.9% for amortization). **AB**

Largest exports by the Philippines, January-June (in dollars)

Export	2000	2001	% fall
Electronic pieces	2.230 billion	1.355 billion	(39.27)
Garments	227.69 million	206.87 million	(9.1)
Coconut oi	47.93 million	35.04 million	(26.9)
Wooden furniture	44.90 million	31.88 million	(29.0)

Largest imports by the Philippines, January-June 2001 (in dollars)

Item	2nd quarter		May	
	Amount	% of total	Amount	% of total
Electronic pieces	537.05 million	20.6	554 million	20.7
Telecommunication equipment	292.45 million	11.2	287 million	10.7
Petrolyo	276.36 million	10.6	274 million	10.2

Source: National Statistics Office

The crisis' severe blow on the people

Intensified poverty. The continued intensification of the country's economic crisis has wrought increasing suffering on the people, especially the toiling masses. According to a statement from the government's National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB), poverty incidence in the country rose from 36.8% in 1997 to 40% in 2000. The NSCB considers a family of six poor if it earns less than P12,000 (or P461.54 for every working day) per month. Poverty incidence would even be worse based on the standards of the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC), an agency under DOLE. According to the NWPC, a family of six would need P15,270 (or P587.31 for every working day) to meet its basic needs. In a survey conducted in March by the Social Weather Station, a private research agency, 15%—the highest in the country's history—are hungry and 59% consider themselves poor. Worsening poverty in the country is tightly linked to the growing number of unemployed, along with low wages of workers.

Worsening unemployment and deterioration of livelihood.

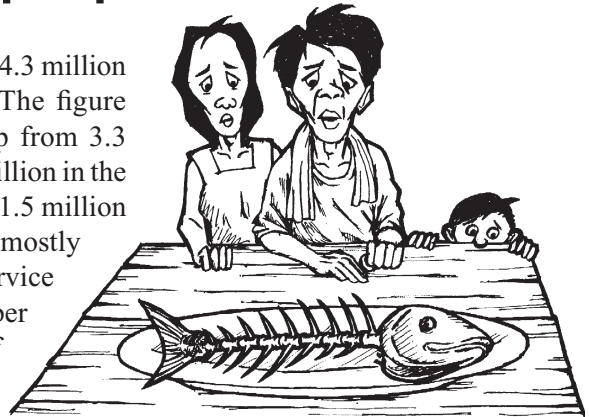
According to official government statistics, more than 4.1 million or 13.3% of the labor force were already without jobs in the second quarter of 2001. The figure represents a big leap from an average of 9.8% in 1999, 11.1% in 2000 and 11.4% in the first quarter of 2001. About 5.4 million or 17.5% are underemployed. Even among those with jobs, 2.7% are unable to work and 38.7% work for less than 40 hours per week.

Not included in the official count of the unemployed and the

underemployed are some 4.3 million unpaid family workers. The figure has also taken a big leap from 3.3 million in 1999 and 3.4 million in the first quarter. Among the 11.5 million "own-account workers", mostly in the agricultural and service sectors, a very large number has unstable sources of income, such as jeepney dispatchers, sidewalk vendors, scavengers and others within the so-called informal sector. Some 15.1 million housewives, students, retirees and handicapped who are all without work, are not even included in the labor force.

Instead of growing, the number of those employed has been dwindling. In 1999, their numbers shrunk by 458,000 compared to the 1998 figure, and last year, their numbers decreased by another 223,000. The figure continues to decline under the current regime. From January to May 2001, up to 218 companies closed shop and 817 laid off workers. As a result, more than 26,000 workers have lost their jobs. A hundred thousands are set to be laid off from their jobs as lower-ranking government employees due to the advancement of the program on the privatization of state-owned corporations.

In addition, more than a million farmers annually are driven by extreme poverty, lack of land to till and the dearth of employment in the countryside, to pour into the cities to seek jobs, swelling the ranks of tens of millions of urban poor. Some 1.3 million were driven by rural poverty in 1998-99 and 1.5 million



in 1999-2000 and their number continues to grow. There are also 800,000 to 1,000,000 youth added to the labor force yearly. They, too, seek employment.

Time bomb of migrant workers.

The only thing that has absorbed massive and growing unemployment is the massive export of labor. The remittances of migrant workers amounting to \$7 billion yearly are among the factors propping up the country's economy and finances. They comprise almost 40% of the country's GNP. Due to worsening unemployment, more and more Filipinos are migrating. Some 2,300 persons leave the country daily to look for work. It is estimated that in a year, another million are added to the more than seven million migrant workers already overseas. But employment opportunities are likely to be depleted. Since 1999, there have been mass layoffs of foreign workers in Asian countries. The Saudi government continues to implement "Saudization" and plans to repatriate the 800,000 Filipinos working there. At present, some 60,000 Filipino workers employed in jewelry factories have been sent home. The rising number of migrant workers is a growing time bomb that

will set off the huge employment and overall economic crisis once the majority are forced to come back.

Extremely low wages. Those employed receive slave wages. The P250 minimum daily wage is not even half of the P587.31 needed daily by a worker with a family of six to live decently. Nonetheless, many more factories and enterprises still do not implement the minimum wage. The workers' movement and its supporters are asserting the need for a P125 increase in the workers' daily wage. But the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime has not done anything towards this end and has instead been trying to deceive the workers by offering them crumbs.

Rising prices and expenses. Rising prices of commodities have long oustripped workers' low wages. The inflation rate has been rising since 1999. It stood at 6.7% in July, from 6.5% in May and 4.3% at the end of 2000. Registering the highest price increases are basic needs such as food and beverages, housing and other services. Continued oil price hikes have yanked up prices of these commodities, along with dwindling peso values vis a vis the dollar and high interest rates. The only thing barring prices from further rising is the big decrease in consumer demand, due to lack of money with which to purchase goods. A peso in 1994 could only purchase P0.62 worth of goods today.

Even basic social services have become more costly for the people, especially for the basic masses. With the implementation of the Power Reform Act, basic electricity charges would supposedly decrease by 30 centavos, only to be recouped through an additional universal charge for electricity. Prior to this, Malacañang had also given its go-signal to Maynilad to raise charges for water services. There is a pending proposal to raise SSS contributions deducted from workers' and employees' pay from 8.4% to 21%. This is supposedly to enable SSS to recover its losses the previous year, due to anomalies in handling the fund, committed by its leaders and the ousted regime.

The broad masses of the people can only expect greater suffering under the continued existence of the decadent semicolonial and semifeudal system, especially as a result of the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's assiduous advance and implementation of "globalization" and other imperialist policies. We must expose and resist the regime's posturing and its aggravation of the people's urgent, basic problems. **AB**

The people's urgent demands



Militant and progressive mass organizations launched a People's Summit to assess the country's situation and identify and unite on the suffering masses' demands. The gathering was held on July 19 at the Film Center, UP Diliman, Quezon City. The declaration ratified by the summit was presented at the opening of the 12th Congress and was meant to counter Macapagal-Arroyo's state of the nation address.

The general declaration drafted by the People's Summit is a fine thing. The declaration clearly defines the urgent issues that the people must fight for to obtain immediate benefits and initial solutions in the face of the blows inflicted by the existing social system and its attendant crises. These shall be the content of the people's day to day struggles. It is important to link day to day struggles to strategic issues that form the content of the people's long-term struggle.

In the past six months, the economy continuously plummeted. Prices of goods and services rose while real wages fell. Like previous governments, the Macapagal-Arroyo government advances the policies of

imperialist "globalization" that wreak immense havoc on our country. Instead of repudiating them, the regime persists with the failed and antipeople policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization. It places the interests of foreign monopoly capital, local big business and big landlords before that of the workers, peasants and other oppressed and exploited classes.

The new government has no relevant economic reforms. It could not offer even urgent or temporary solutions to the people's poverty. Instead, it occupies itself with pretentious measures that aim to attract the support of the pro-Erap masses.

The people's abject poverty is exacerbated by injustice and continued violations of human rights. Strikes and the setting up of unions in factories are practically banned. The Estrada regime's "total war" policy has supposedly been done away with, but militarization and military offensives that have wrought havoc on the masses, especially in the countryside, persist. There is virtual martial law in Southern Mindanao in the name of eradicating the Abu Sayyaf Group.

Meanwhile, it remains

unclear whether justice could be attained in the criminal cases filed against Estrada and his cohorts. There are disturbing signs of maneuvering and compromise in the conduct of these cases. It is likewise necessary to prosecute even more relentlessly the ill-gotten wealth case against the Marcoses and their cronies and cases of violations of human rights during the dictatorship.

Indeed, the thoroughgoing justice and the changes aspired for in People Power 2 have not been achieved. We must be relentless in our militancy and collective action for the sake of the people's urgent and long-term interests. We must remind the Macapagal-Arroyo government of its immense responsibility to the people.

Thus, by virtue of the People's Summit, the following people's demands shall hereby be advanced:

1 URGENT MEASURES FOR THE RELIEF OF THE SUFFERING MASSES:

- P125 across-the-board wage increase for private sector workers
- P3,000 across-the-board salary increase for government employees
- Price control on basic goods and services
- Moratorium on all demolitions, launching of on-site relocation and livelihood programs for the urban poor
- Halting all conversion of agricultural land and stopping the evacuation of peasants
- Recognition of the rights of national minorities to their

ancestral lands

- Putting a stop to the liberalization of agricultural imports
- Ceasing the collection of unjust fees from migrant Filipinos
- Putting an end to servicing unjust foreign debts and terminating the automatic allocation of funds for debt service
- Increase in funds for basic social services like education, housing and health

2 STOPPING THE PRIVATIZATION OF NAPOCOR, NFA, SSS AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES AND SERVICES, ESPECIALLY PUBLIC HOSPITALS

3 SPEEDY TRIAL OF FORMER PRESIDENT ESTRADA AND HIS CO-CONSPIRATORS IN THE PLUNDER CASE, WITH FULL MEDIA COVERAGE

4 ADVANCEMENT AND DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- Putting a stop to militarization in the countryside
- Release of all political prisoners
- Indemnification of all victims of human rights violations under martial law
- Repeal of all suppressive laws
- Implementation of the CARHRIHL, especially the establishment and operationalization of the Joint Monitoring Committee
- Stopping military offensives against the Moro people and widespread violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law
- Meting out of justice on and providing legal services to migrant prisoners **AB**



Continuing resistance against the privatization of the Social Security System

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime has no intention of shelving its plans to privatize the Social Security System (SSS) despite fierce and widespread resistance from SSS employees.

The SSS, which is set to be privatized by 2004, is but one of the government financial institutions and corporations to be subjected to privatization upon orders of the International Monetary Fund. The privatization of the National Power Corporation was recently approved. Soon to be privatized are the National Housing Authority, National Food Authority and other government agencies.

SSS employees have been staging pickets during their lunch hour since the latter part of May to resist the agency's privatization. But their grievances fell on deaf ears. SSS president Vitaliano Nañagas even deceived the employees in saying that the planned privatization of the security agency would not push through. Instead, the SSS would implement "outsourcing" or the availment of services outside of the agency in accomplishing the company's tasks.

"Outsourcing" is a wily maneuver that would privatize the SSS piece by piece. In line with this, Information Technology Management and the Health Care Program have been abolished and the Information Technology and Assets and Loans Department have been put in the hands of private entities.

The outsourcing of the SSS'

Information Technology is in preparation for the company's fullblown privatization. Numerous private corporations have been taking a keen interest in this since SSS has one of the most advanced computer systems in Asia for the processing of pension claims. But with the rapid advances in technology, especially with respect to computers, SSS will only serve as a dumping ground for foreign companies' outmoded equipment.

Also to be subjected to outsourcing are departments that have to do with other services such as bookkeeping, accounting, payroll, hiring, human resources administration, cash management and control, financial reporting, tax reporting, accounts receivable collection, accounts payable administration, customer statements processing, customer call centers, distribution logistics, transaction processing centers, temporary staffing and website design.

This, the job security of some 4,000 SSS employees is gravely in peril. More than this, the interests of the security agency's 23 million members are endangered.

The SSS' funds amounting to P174 billion, come from the contributions of members, mainly rank-and-file private sector workers and employees.

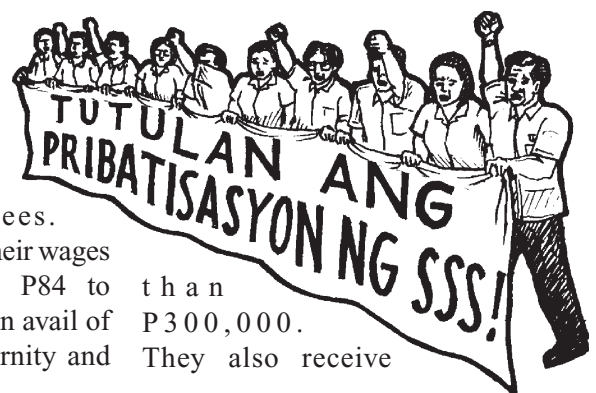
Monthly deductions from their wages and salaries range from P84 to P782. In exchange, they can avail of retirement, sickness, maternity and

other benefits, which are not easily availed of by members.

Putting this giant fund under private administration is the main target of the SSS' privatization. By privatizing this fund, any financial company that administers it would be able to extract immense profits from the contributions and insurance funds of 23 million workers and employees across the country.

Due to the size of this fund, corrupt and greedy government officials have long been interested in it. It served as one of the ousted Joseph Estrada's milch cows when he ordered former SSS president Carlos Arellano to use P1.1 billion in SSS funds to buy shares from Belle Corporation (a company owned by Estrada through his crony and dummy Dante Tan). Estrada also ordered the president of the Government Service Insurance System to buy shares from the same corporation. From the total P1.8 billion SSS and GSIS funds that were loaned and used to purchase Belle Corporation shares, Estrada raked in P284 million in capital gains and P189 million in commissions.

A large amount is likewise deducted from SSS funds due to very high salaries, bonuses, incentives, per diems and other privileges received by the SSS' own officials. The monthly salaries alone of the SSS' president and 58 vice presidents range from no less than P100,000 to more



than P300,000. They also receive

13th, 14th, even 16th month pay. Aside from this, SSS officials earned an additional P235.1 million in bonuses and P211 million in incentives last year. They also receive P150,000 as per diem whenever they attend board meetings of companies where the SSS is represented.

The Macapagal-Arroyo regime made a partial retreat from privatizing the SSS when the latter's employees staged a widespread protest action. The employees picketed during their lunchbreak for 70 days to express their displeasure at the planned privatization and over Nañagas' management style. This culminated in a four-day walkout led by the Alert and Concerned Employees for a Better SSS (ACCESS) that paralyzed all SSS offices nationwide. They were supported by COURAGE, Kilusang Mayo Uno and other militant groups. In the face of such intense protests, Macapagal-Arroyo was obliged to pull out Nañagas from the SSS on August 2 to douse cold water on the employees' burning struggle.

The step was supposed to be the Macapagal-Arroyo regime's "peace formula". But it did not take long before it dealt with the situation with a mailed fist. Newly appointed SSS president Corazon de la Paz has said that employees who led and joined the walkout would be charged even as she declared that reforms (meaning measures leading to privatization) that had been previously initiated in the SSS would continue. Management is closely studying means by which to weaken the organization of SSS employees to prevent a repeat of the strike once the agency is privatized.

But the SSS employees, along with employees of the NFA, NHA and other government agencies about to be privatized, have averred that they will not relent in their fight against privatization. They are fighting for job security and the welfare of the people who would be deprived of services due them. Their steadfast stand and collective action have already reaped a small victory. In merging their struggle with the people's broader struggle, they hope to achieve even bigger and more thoroughgoing victories. **AB**

Military operations in Bicol condemned

THE ROMULO JALLORES COMMAND (RJC) OF THE NEW PEOPLE'S Army (NPA) in Bicol condemned the unbridled militarization of the region.

In a statement released on August 6, RJC spokesperson Comrade Jose Buenaobra assailed the encirclement on July 28 by the 42nd IB Alpha Company of a house in Sitio Naposte, Barangay Amomokpok, Ragay, Camarines Sur where Red fighters were allegedly staying.

Killed in the reactionary troops' offensive was Jesus "Ka Lito" Emeros. A youth named Matias Rafael Padilla Din was also arrested. Ka Lito, a native of Ragay, was accused of being an NPA fighter. Matias Din is a former student of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City living among the peasantry.

AFP: PROMASSES IN WORD, BUTCHERS IN DEED

According to Ka Jose, the 42nd IB conducted the encirclement despite its challenge to the NPA to temporarily stop all military actions in the region to help the victims of the Mayon volcano eruption. "The actual nonstop operations of the AFP's troops even in the province of Albay are a violation of its own hollow posturing," said Ka Jose.

Ka Jose disclosed that in reality, the AFP's much ballyhooed "assistance" to victims of the Mayon volcano eruption is nothing but a deceptive ploy foisted on the people and the revolutionary movement. Posing as promasses, the AFP obeys without fail, orders to protect the properties of the ruling classes such as banks, shopping malls and rice and food warehouses. Meanwhile, its successive offensives continue to sow terror and wreak havoc on the lives of the toiling masses. "The maintenance of 'peace and order' are operations to 'control the people'," said Ka Jose. "Thus, their armed and uniformed presence in the towns comprises terrorism against the masses, even as there is an ever present threat of fascist attacks with the minimum declaration of a red alert status".

The spokesperson drew a line between the revolutionary NPA and the reactionary AFP. "Contrary to the reactionary AFP's dubious 'civic action'," he said, "it is integral to the character and orientation of the NPA to assist the people at all times, whether or not a calamity exists." He explained that the NPA constantly serves as a partner of the peasant masses and of all oppressed people in fighting for their own land to till, raising incomes from production, launching education, health, environmental and many other campaigns. "Most of all," he said, "the NPA is the people's partner in the revolutionary struggle to completely eradicate poverty and injustice due to exploitation and oppression by foreigners and the local ruling classes of landlords ▶



NEWS OF STRUGGLE

PNP OFFICIAL PUNISHED IN OCCIDENTAL MINDORO

The New People's Army (NPA) in Occidental Mindoro meted punishment on the PNP assistant provincial police director for operations in the province, Sr. Supt. Winston Ebersole. The punitive operation was conducted in the morning of August 29 in Barangay Labangan, Poblacion San Jose in the same province.

Ebersole was punished for his many transgressions against the people and the revolutionary movement in Occidental Mindoro. In a two-page statement, Comrade Victor Rivero, spokesperson of the Lucio de Guzman command (NPA-Mindoro) said that Ebersole was responsible for the torture and salvaging in November 1987 of Comrade Lucio de Guzman. The NPA's overall command in Mindoro was named after the latter, who was then secretary of the Mindoro Island Party Committee.

Ebersole was also responsible for the summary execution that same year of student leader Arnel Mendoza. Mendoza, said Comrade Rivero, was dropped into the sea from a helicopter.

These crimes were perpetrated by the 268th Philippine Constabulary Coy then led by Ebersole.

Ebersole was also involved in the formation of anti-communist vigilante groups and operated gun-for-hire, robbery, holdup and gunrunning syndicates.

2 POLICEMEN DIE IN AGUSAN DEL SUR AMBUSH

Two policemen from the Talacogon Police Station in Agusan del Sur were killed in an ambush by Red fighters on August 1.

SPO3 Antonio Godoy Labarete and PO1 Darwin de Jesus Tecson Jr. were conducting a regular patrol when ambushed by the guerrillas at the Del Monte Gym, Talacogon at around 10 p.m. while celebrating the barangay's fiesta.

The policemen died on the spot. The BHB confiscated from them a .45 and a 9 mm.

CAFGU RECRUITER PUNISHED

Red fighters punished Isabelo Barbecho II, an active recruiter for the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU) around morning of August 25.

Barbecho was former barangay captain of Barangay Pawa, Matnog, Sorsogon. He was punished by Red fighters after he ignored several warnings from the revolutionary movement to stop his avid recruitment of male residents in the barangay into the CAFGU. He also masterminded

the formation of an intelligence network that caused the arrest or killing of revolutionary forces in the barangay and surrounding areas.

Barbecho was the brother of Col. Isabelo Barbecho III, former commander of the 2nd IB that is currently wreaking havoc in Juban, Sorsogon.

DEFENSIVE TRANSFORMED TO OFFENSIVE IN CEBU

Two Scout Ranger elements from Task Force Cebu were killed when their unit encircled an NPA camp in Sitio Bungyas, Barangay Ampungol, Sogod, Cebu City on August 20. The troops' commander, SSgt. Antonio Salinas, was also wounded.

The Scout Rangers were nearing the NPA camp at 10:25 a.m. when they were noticed by the Red fighters. The guerrillas immediately opened fire, inflicting casualties on the reactionary troops. The latter retreated, their plans of encircling the Red fighters foiled. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

BAYAN MUNA REPRESENTATIVES SWORN IN

Bayan Muna representatives Crispin Beltran (Ka Bel), Satur Ocampo (Ka Satur) and Liza Masa (Ka Liza) were sworn in as congressmen on August 20. ►

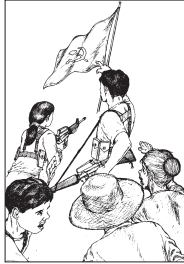
◄ and the comprador bourgeoisie."

The RJC, in its statement, stressed that the reactionary military were fascists and butchers to the bone. He cited the brutal killing of Ma. Graziella "Ka Sisa" Miranda, 25, a fine CPP and NPA cadre in Albay and also a former student at UP Diliman before she decided to work fulltime in the NPA in 1998. Ka Sisa was captured alive, tortured and killed by troops of the 22nd IB in retaliation for the sniping of two soldiers

when the AFP raided an NPA camp in Barangay Bololo, Guinobatan, Albay on June 10.

The RJC also exposed the rabid fascism of 42nd IB commander Col. Danilo Lim. Colonel Lim, said Ka Jose, who graduated from the imperialist West Point military academy, has incurred blood debts from the revolutionary movement. One of them involved the torture and killing of an NPA cadre in the mid-1980s, when Lim was still a lieutenant. AB

Comrade Antonio Zumel honored



A NUMBER OF MEMORIAL MEETINGS WERE HELD FOR THE ESTEEMED revolutionary leader Comrade Antonio Zumel who died on August 13.

Comrade Zumel was known as a revolutionary newspaper man and leader even during the 1970s. He was a member of the Communist Party of the Philippines Central Committee, chaired the National Democratic Front from 1990-94 and served as its honorary chairman since 1994. He was the NDFP's senior adviser from 1992. In 1972, Ka Zumel was among the newspaper men who left their relatively comfortable lives and established careers to join the revolutionary underground movement fulltime to fight the US-Marcos dictatorship. He was among the first members of the editorial staff of *Liberation* (the NDF's official publication) and the Balita ng Malayang Pilipinas (the NDF news agency). He also served as editor of *Dangadang* (revolutionary mass paper of Ilocos-Montañosa). Before he was assigned to Europe in the latter part of the 1980s, he was a member of the Party's National Propaganda Commission and the editor of *Ang Bayan*. He died from an aggravated kidney ailment, diabetes and heart complications.

**"KA ZUMEL OFFERED HIS
TALENTS AND CAPABILITIES
AS A NEWSPAPER MAN TO THE
MOVEMENT. HE WAS EXCELLENT
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THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION."**

—KA JOSE MARIA SISON

On August 17, various revolutionary and progressive organizations both in the Philippines and in The Netherlands paid tribute to him .

In the Philippines, about 1,000 relatives, friends and comrades of Ka Zumel and even officials of the reactionary government attended the "Parangal ng Bayan" (People's Tribute) conducted in his honor. They gathered at the Church of the Holy Sacrifice at the University of the Philippines in Diliman and

◀ In an interview, Ka Satur said that congressional work was merely an extension of the people's democratic movement.

On August 21, Bayan Muna filed its very first bill in Congress, House Bill No. 2605 that called for a P125 nationwide across-the-board increase for private sector

workers and House Bill No. 2606 calling for a P3,000-increase in the monthly salaries of government employees.

Right after the bills were filed, the three representatives joined a human chain along the streets surrounding the Batasang Pambansa. Among those who

formed the human chain were various militant organizations such as Wage Increase Solidarity.

The Bayan Muna representatives' oathtaking was delayed for months while the Supreme Court reviewed the qualifications of groups that participated in the party list elections.

rendered their tributes and farewells to the revolutionary leader.

Ma. Luisa Zumel Lopez, Comrade Zumel's eldest sister, spoke for the family. Ka Zumel's colleagues in media, as well as his former comrades in the underground movement who are now professionals or part of the legal democratic movement also paid tribute. The government's chief peace negotiator Silvestre Bello and panel member DAR Sec. Hernani Braganza likewise attended the gathering.

A mural featuring Comrade Zumel was prepared for the occasion by progressive artists. Photographs from as far back as his youth were exhibited.

It was close to midnight when the gathering closed with a video presentation that featured his life and struggle.

At the Crematorium Daelwijk in Utrecht, The Netherlands, Ka Zumel's siblings and relatives, including former AFP Brig. Gen. Jose Ma. Carlos Zumel, gathered for an interment service. With them at the service were Ka Zumel's comrades in the NDFP, close friends, representatives of various organizations and parties and the Filipino community in The Netherlands.

Chief NDFP negotiator Comrade Luis Jalandoni gave the opening remarks at the service. In his tribute, Comrade Jalandoni said that revolutionary principles were very much alive in Ka Zumel: in his warm camaraderie with comrades, friends, the masses and allies and in fulfilling to the utmost his responsibilities, within or outside the country.

"With his passing, the revolutionary movement has lost a great leader," said Comrade Coni Ledesma, who narrated his life story.

Comrade Julie de Lima-Sison added, "He was an exemplary communist. His contributions in advancing the Philippine revolution were invaluable." She said that "Ka Zumel offered his talents and capabilities as a newspaper man to the movement. He was excellent in information and education work. He followed in the brilliant tradition

of Marcelo H. del Pilar and Amado V. Hernandez. The pen complemented the sword of the Philippine revolution."

The service featured prayer offerings from communities of migrant Filipinos and a message of tribute from Ka Zumel's family and siblings. After this, the late revolutionary leader's favorite songs were played.

That evening, more Filipinos, friends, admirers and comrades gathered at the old church in Utrecht to pay tribute to Ka Zumel. More than 50 organizations, political parties and individuals from within and outside the country sent messages of condolence and solidarity, including Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Among those who gave touching speeches was Comrade Jose Ma. Sison. Former AFP General Zumel also once more paid tribute and expressed awe at the outpouring of sympathy for his revolutionary brother's passing.

The whole day of August 17, sympathizers and mourners poured into the NDFP International Information Office in Utrecht.

According to comrades, Ka Zumel's last public speech read at the Solidarity Conference for a Just and Lasting Peace in April was a virtual farewell. He said: "Those of us who joined the movement in its infancy in the late 1960s or early 1970s are getting on in years. Among the most senior in years compared to the young people in our movement, I am myself approaching my 69th year and will soon be gone. Those of us who are getting on in years can only look with satisfaction and pride on the swelling ranks of the revolutionary movement that now fights for our people's national and democratic rights—and in the future, for socialism." **AB**

"AMONG THE MOST SENIOR IN YEARS COMPARED TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR MOVEMENT, I AM MYSELF APPROACHING MY 69TH YEAR AND WILL SOON BE GONE. THOSE OF US WHO ARE GETTING ON IN YEARS CAN ONLY LOOK WITH SATISFACTION AND PRIDE ON THE SWELLING RANKS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT THAT NOW FIGHTS FOR OUR PEOPLE'S NATIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS—AND IN THE FUTURE, FOR SOCIALISM."

—KA ANTONIO ZUMEL